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during the last phase of the war, between the 'partisans' of the two countries. This solidarity was increased by the ideological affinities between the two régimes.

On September 15 the Russians made their entry into Sofia. The day before, Gheorgiev had issued a proclamation: 'The Homeland Front will place all its means and all its forces at the disposal of the Soviet Union and her great allies, in order to drive the Germans out of the Balkans. It will immediately do its utmost to establish *an indissoluble alliance with the U.S.S.R. and the new Yugoslavia,* and to form ties of sincere friendship with the great Western democracies, with the United States and with our neighbours'.

It was in her effort to reconcile the Russian 'alliance' with her democratic 'friendships' that liberated Bulgaria made her first blunder on the international stage. The Government had fixed the general elections for August 26, 1945. It was backed by a coalition of five parties (Communists, Agrarians, Socialists, *Zveno,* Radicals), forming the *Otetchestvenni Front* (Patriotic Front), which unleashed against its adversaries a violent campaign of persecutions. It did not seem, either to the English or to the Americans, that this régime represented very sound ideas of democracy. Evidently several members of the Bulgarian Cabinet shared this view, for in the month of August they resigned and went over to the Opposition.

It was then that the London and Washington Governments advised Sofia that they could not recognise the régime that might result from the elections, in view of the atmosphere of oppression and constraint under which these promised to be held.

The Gheorgiev Government haughtily rejected this communication, while the press denounced the old 'colonial policy' habits, of which it bore the stamp. But to the general surprise it was learned, on the following day, that the elections were adjourned indefinitely. And a few hours later the President of the Council explained that the incident was due to a misunderstanding; that, in Bulgaria, democracy was of the 'Balkan' type, and that the chief thing for Bulgaria was to conclude a peace treaty by the quickest possible means. On the next day but one (August 27) the American Government agreed to the restoration of diplomatic relations and received the new Bulgarian representative in Washington, General Vladimir Stoïtchev.

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The sudden volte-face on the part of the Sofia Cabinet was very easy to explain. Trusting entirely to Russian support, the Bulgarians had never for a moment doubted that Russia would consider the Anglo-American attitude as negligible. They therefore contented themselves with invoking the necessity of consulting the Inter-allied Control Commission, in which the Soviet representative's influence was predominant. Judge of the Government's surprise on learning, from the mouth of that representative (General Birousov), that the Commission had been unanimous in recommending the postponement of the elections!

They had been put off until November 18. The day before, the Washington Government renewed its warning of the month of August, to the effect that the conditions under which the election promised to be held would no doubt prevent it from considering the resulting Government as being the authentic expression of the 'popular will'.

It was difficult to know whether the American attitude arose from the conviction that the Bulgarian electoral law was less 'correct' than the Yugoslav electoral law, or whether the discrimination followed from the fact that Yugoslavia was an allied, and Bulgaria a vanquished, country.

But this time the Sofia Cabinet held out and the elections took place on the date fixed. They gave 75–85 per cent of the votes cast to the Patriotic Front, the Opposition parties having decided to abstain.

However, the Government wisely refrained from giving to this poll the appearance of a retort to the American veto. On the contrary, it advised Washington of its intention to enlarge the basis of the Government on democratic lines.

It is certain that the rivalry between the Agrarians and the Communists offers prospects of internal crises. But, from the external point of view, Bulgaria's policy is fixed *ne varietur*. It will depend on Moscow's goodwill. The Bulgarian people, profoundly Russophile, will find little difficulty in accepting this new state of affairs. There is more doubt as to whether the same thing will be true of the leaders, who will always find it difficult to resign themselves to having only one card in their diplomatic game.

* * *

The Slavonic problem presents quite a different appearance

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founded on despotism and personal power? The law of August 25, 1945 on the control of the press banned not only the ex-'collaborators', but also the publishers of 'alarmist' news or of news 'contrary to the general interest'—as conceived by the Government, naturally. A well-informed police organisation, modelled on Russian methods, ceaselessly exercised a very close watch over public opinion and, naturally, indulged in arbitrary arrests and acts of violence.

This policy led to dissension within the Government. The leader of the Serbian Democratic Party, Milan Grol, resigned on August 19[1]; on October 8[1] he was followed into retirement by Dr. Ivan Choubachich and the Minister Choutei, both Croat Agrarians.

Choubachich's resignation was serious, for it upset a ministerial equilibrium which had been agreed upon among the Allies. Yet what was this agreement worth, since Tito, repudiating the terms of the compromise which had sanctioned his authority, had pronounced against the monarchy? 'Not one of our combatants thought that anything new could be created under the leadership of the King, especially as the Nediches and Mihailoviches committed their crimes in his name. . . . The point is, whether the monarchy is compatible with the new system of Yugoslav Federal Democracy. . . . For several reasons, I think it is not'.

The next day (August 8, 1945) King Peter replied to this declaration by withdrawing from the Regents the power they held from him.

Tito was not intimidated by this retort. He declared that the Government acted in agreement with all the creative and constructive forces of the country, with all sincerely democratic parties. The masses of the populace had acquired, during the war, firmly-rooted political knowledge which had nothing in common with the electoral catchwords with which they previously used to be taken in.

The Opposition replied that free elections would prove the truth of this assertion, whereas those to which the country had been called were not free. The Americans and the English repeatedly emphasised the reserves they made regarding their attitude towards the régime which would result from this poll.

The elections took place on November 11.[1] They gave to the

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National Front 80–90 per cent of the votes cast.[4] It is true that the Opposition abstained from voting (its Belgrade organ, *Demokratia*, was suspended) and that the electoral system favoured the Coalition Government. But the Anglo-Americans took no action. They declared the results of the poll to be 'acceptable'. On these results were based the two Assemblies (Union Assembly and Assembly of the Nationalities) which, following Russian lines, were to control the country's constitutional life.

In short, both at home and abroad, Tito was master of the situation. He had armed forces, the levers of control, fanatical partisans, a 'Youth' following, attached to a régime which had radically reorganised the whole staffing of the army, the administrative services, and diplomacy. But certain large sections of opinion were not with him. In the provinces the old parties were still solidly rooted. Those circles criticised the 'personal' and 'plebiscite' character of the régime, which was an unprecedented innovation in Serbian political life. Against the Marshal were the Monarchists, the old army, Serbian nationalism, Croat particularism, Slovene 'Clericalism'. For a long time he alienated the Catholic clergy; on October 18, Radio-Vatican broadcast a letter from the Yugoslav bishops to the Belgrade Government, accusing the latter of systematically persecuting the Roman Church.

And this was only criticism of internal affairs. Tito was further reproached with having reorganised relations between the Yugoslav populations on anachronistic bases. How would this State turn out—a State of twelve million inhabitants, with six autonomous Governments, capped with a Federal Government? Where would the frontiers of Croatia and Serbia be? And those of Serbia and Macedonia? Could the Macedonian question be considered as settled by the granting of autonomy? And would not the Bulgaro-Yugoslav *entente*, advertised as a victory for the régime, be submitted to a severe test when autonomy gave rise to political disputes in this country which, for a century, had been torn by undercurrents of passion and foreign intrigue? Was

[4] According to official statistics, out of 8,383,455 electors and 7,413,214 votes cast, 6,574,975 went to the National Front. The franchise had been given to women; the electoral age had been lowered to 18, and even lower for those who had fought in the liberation.

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engendered. For the occasion, they forgot the fact that the monarchy had, more than once, had its prerogatives disputed by dictatorships. Only by assassination did Ferdinand get rid of Stamboulov, and Boris of Stamboliiski. And M. Gheorgiev himself had been able to overthrow parliamentary government only because the army had given him a helping hand. The will of the sovereign had entered little into that event.

However that might be, the fate of the monarchy was settled. By doing away with it, the Bulgarian people were convinced that they were clarifying their destiny. The young King Simeon II, then aged 8, was living in Vranja with his mother and his sister, in an isolation which was practically exile, while the royal duties were performed by three regents appointed by the National Front. On September 8, 1946, the Bulgarian nation, by a huge majority (3,800,000 votes to 179,000), voted in favour of the republic, which was proclaimed on the 15th of the same month. The following week Simeon II, under the care of the Queen-Mother, who was dressed in deep mourning, embarked on a Turkish vessel bound for Egypt, where he was to join his maternal grandfather, ex-King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy. One newspaper *Otetchestvene Front* (Homeland Front) published, by way of farewell, an article by General Hristo Stölkov, reproaching the defunct monarchy for having isolated Bulgaria from the other Slavonic peoples. 'It is no accident if, at the time of the first imperialist war, all the Slavs [*sic*] were on the side of the Allies, whilst Bulgaria alone threw in her lot with Germany'.

The convening of the electoral body for October 27[1] gave rise to a diplomatic passage of arms among the Allies. The British Government protested against the obstacles put in the way of the Opposition's campaign, and against the persecution to which the Agrarians were subjected. And Mr. Byrnes asked the Allied Control Commission, sitting in Sofia, to take adequate measures to guarantee the integrity of the poll. Russia's representative on the Commission, General Birousov, opposed the consideration of this request, which he denounced as foreign interference with Bulgarian home affairs.

The elections gave the anticipated results; the Home Front secured 346 seats (of which 277 went to the Communists) as against the Opposition's 101 seats. It would appear that this

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• 666 175 result even exceeded the expectations of M. Gheorgiev, who took fright at the excitement stirred up in the country by the Communists—hence this appeal to the population: 'Victory often intoxicates men, and defeat makes them lose their self-control. Tension resulting from elections, if not rapidly mastered, may help to foster a state of excitement prejudicial to order and tranquillity. The Government earnestly exhorts all citizens strictly to observe the laws'.

Spectacular as was the triumph of governmental coalition, it did not reach the overwhelming majorities of which Russia and Yugoslavia held the secret. In particular, the ministerial fraction belonging to the *Zveno* was beaten, so that the country had modified, to the advantage of the Communists, the relative strengths within the coalition. Now, in a nation which had neither capitalism nor trusts nor large industrial concerns nor *latifundia,* the word *Communist* had a meaning which was much more political than social.[a] It was above all the victory of the 'Russianisers', long held in check by the official policy.

[563] It must moreover be admitted that, renewing the gesture of the liberating Tsar, the Soviet Union had just saved the Bulgarian people by protecting them from the consequences of their rulers' collusion with the Axis. The question that still remained was whether Russia would not have preferred to be defended in Sofia by traditionally 'national' elements, rather than by a party too openly connected with Moscow, and whose leader, George Dimitrov, the hero of the Leipzig trial, was thought to be a tool of Russia.

642 175 As a logical consequence of the elections, a new Government was in fact formed by Dimitrov on November 23.[1] It included ten Communists, five Agrarians, two Socialists, two members of the *Zveno* and one Independent. The ex-President, Kimon Gheorgiev, held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. The semi-official press saw it as 'the most democratic Government Bulgaria has ever had', whilst the Opposition emphasised the complete hold on power which the Communists had obtained.

648 175 This Government's vital tasks were to be signing the peace and voting the Constitution. On February 12, 1947, it secured

[162] [a] The working-class strengths, on which the Communists rely, are very small; indeed, 80% of the population are engaged in agriculture, not to mention tradesmen, civil servants, and members of the liberal professions.

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war, now had only three—Russia, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. One aspect of her new position which represented an innovation was her transformation into a great maritime nation, thanks to the three ports, Stettin, Gdynia, and Danzig, and to her 312 miles of coast-line. Nevertheless, her destiny would henceforth be more closely bound to that of Central Europe, while remaining subordinate to the *entente* with Moscow.

The western frontiers were approved by the plebiscite of June 30, which covered not only the frontier-ratification, but also the abolition of the Senate and the economic organisation of the State (Agrarian reform and nationalisation of key industries). The first ballot gave 10,534,697 in favour and 995,584 against; the second gave 7,844,522 in favour and 3,686,029 against; the third, 8,896,106 in favour and 2,634,446 against.

This popular referendum did not have the tranquillising effects that had seemingly been expected. Poland continued to be a prey to 'terrorist' agitation, the repression of which, in turn, gave rise to scenes of violence and to exactions. While dissociating himself from the extremists, the leader of the Polish Peasant Party, M. Mikolajczyk, himself protested against the way in which the referendum had been carried out (except in Cracow, where the 'Noes' had been in the majority). So the British Government reserved its opinion on the legitimacy which this poll conferred on the régime, and awaited the general elections before giving legal recognition to the new state of affairs. And the whole of 1946 was taken up with exchanges of subacid notes between London and Washington on the one side and Warsaw on the other. The Anglo-Americans denounced the persecution to which the Opposition was subjected, and considered that the Polish Government was failing in the undertaking given in execution of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, to guarantee the liberty of elections. But the Russians interpreted quite differently both the scope of these agreements and the meaning of the word 'liberty'. And so the most obvious result of the diplomatic offensive on the part of England and the United States was to intensify Polish-Sovietic solidarity.

The formation, in June, of a National Unity Government under the Presidency of M. Osubka Morawski seemed, for the time being, to dissipate the apprehensions of the Anglo-Americans, although the dissident Polish Government in London

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had refused to recognise this new Cabinet. But the truce was a short one. The preparation of the electoral law, voted on September 23, revived the controversy[13] and occasioned a fresh diplomatic assault. The Foreign Office and the State Department sent to Warsaw, on August 19, concerted notes, couched as 'warnings'. They recalled the irregularities known to have taken place on the occasion of the referendum, and suggested a series of measures calculated to prevent their repetition in connection with the elections. When handing over the American note, the United States ambassador felt the need to justify such an unusual step: 'In departing from its traditional policy', he said, 'and in assuming responsibilities in the affairs of another State, my Government is obeying a conviction that its important role in the liberation of the European peoples imposes on it very particularly the duty to assist the Polish people, so sorely tried by the Nazi occupation, to be quite free to elect the government of its choice'.

M. Osubka Morawski took this double admonition very badly. His embassy in Washington declared to the press that the American note 'constituted a violation of the sovereign rights of Poland and an interference in her internal affairs'; the Warsaw press spoke of 'vassalisation'; and the two notes received no official reply.

A few days later the Polish leaders went to Minsk, where, on August 29, they met Generalissimo Stalin, with whom they discussed the question of the elections. They received assurances which enabled them, thenceforth, to resist the Anglo-American offensive.

Meanwhile a disagreement which had arisen between London and Warsaw a few weeks previously was being settled. This concerned a protest made by the Polish Government against

[13] A memorandum was sent, in August 1946, to the representatives of the United Nations taking part in the Peace Conference in Paris by the 'Polish Socialist and Workers' Associations Abroad'; its authors recalled the sufferings of Poland during the war, demanded the re-establishment of civic liberties, and declared that the Government had against it 'about 90% of the public opinion of the country'. The Conference was also notified of a protest on the part of the Central Union of Poles in France and of the Union of Catholic Polish Societies in France. In the following month, the Congress of Americans of Polish Origin addressed to Mr. Byrnes a memorandum suggesting that the problem of Poland should be laid before the United Nations, and asking for recognition of the western frontiers.

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2. Reorganisation and re-equipment of the Anders Army.
3. Control exercised by the exiled Polish Government in London over property wrongfully left at its disposal, together with that of the Polish Consulates abroad.
4. Retention of the Polish gold deposited in London during the war.
5. Retention of the Polish battle-ships placed at the disposal of the British war-fleet during the occupation.
6. Financing by Great Britain of the campaign to dissuade Polish refugees and deportees from returning to their country.
7. Reduction of the quota of Germans from the western territories of Poland that England had undertaken to admit to her occupation zone in Germany.

This fruitless exchange of notes continued until the eve of the elections. In the end, England realised its futility, whereas, on January 5, 1947, America laid before her two major Allies a proposal for joint supervision of the electoral proceedings. Russia rejected this proposal, once again refuting its motives, and a further American note of January 9, was described by the Polish chargé d'affaires at Washington as 'very regrettable'.

• [66]

The elections, held on January 19,[1] resulted in 9,003,682 votes for the Governmental bloc (*i.e.*, 80.1 per cent of the voters) as against 1,154,847 for the Polish Peasant Party (*i.e.*, 10.3 per cent).

The comedy of the Anglo-American protests did not end with this poll. It had its epilogue in a note from Washington, dated January 29, affirming that the State Department neither considered the elections to have been free, nor Poland's engagements to have been kept, but did not, nevertheless, intend to break off diplomatic relations.[15] The British Under-Secretary

[15] This did not prevent Mr. Truman from making the following statement to the new Polish ambassador, M. Winieniez, when, on February 4, the latter presented his credentials. 'We, the American people and myself, were very much upset to find that the Provisional Government of Poland had failed to fulfil its undertakings with regard to freedom of elections' —which was contrary to the conventional optimism with which these ceremonial occasions are usually surrounded. And, in the *New York Herald Tribune* (European edition), the ex-Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, published this violent commentary: 'The results of the elections in Poland have been even more fantastic than was to be expected. The P.S.L. (Polish Peasant Party) have been allocated one-tenth of the man-

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concerned, and executive agents for Prague for Czechoslovak affairs. This was the solution found for the dualism previously existing in Czechoslovakia.

In virtue of this system the Slovaks have institutions which enable them to settle their own problems, while at the same time participating in the general control of the country. Hence the current joke about the 'Slovakisation of Czechoslovakia'.

Thus did President Benes succeed in adapting the spiritual heritage of Masaryk, and his own tendencies, to an internal and external situation very different from that which, in 1918, had shaped the rebirth of the Czech nation. And yet Benes took pains to safeguard signs of independence, and to maintain bonds of spiritual solidarity with the West, in order to attest his faith in his country's mission as a mediatrix, her role as a stabilising factor between the East and the West of the Continent. But the new Czechoslovakia no longer reflected the image that Masaryk had popularised—that of a European Slavism formed in the school of the Liberal Democracies.

The first elections carried out after the liberation—those of May 26, 1946—gave a slight majority to the Marxists, who had 153 seats out of the 300 of which the National Assembly was composed.[19]

This shift in the majority had little practical effect. The internal policy, based on nationalisation,[20] and the realisation of a very advanced social programme, underwent the fewer modifications, inasmuch as the Communists, anticipating their electoral victory, had already secured possession of the principal control levers.

[19] The results were as follows:—

	Votes	*Percentage*
Bohemia-Moravia		
Communists	2,205,658	40.17
National-Socialists	1,298,967	23.66
Populars	1,010,920	20.23
Social-Democrats	855,771	15.59
Slovakia		
Democrats (Christian)	988,275	61.43
Communists	490,257	30.48
Liberty Party	67,575	4.20
Labour Party	49,983	3.11

As will be seen, the majority was reversed in Bohemia and in Slovakia.

[20] The nationalisation programme which took effect on March 13, 1946, placed the majority of the key-industries under State control. Commenting on this event, the Minister of Industry declared: 'This day marks a date in the history of the world's industry'.

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described it as a 'crime against European civilisation', and on October 1 it was brought up at the Security Council by the French delegate, Parodi, during a discussion on Bulgaria's candidature for the United Nations. 648 696 829 175

In January, 1948, on the occasion of the signing of a treaty of mutual assistance with Rumania, the Bulgarian Premier, Dimitrov, risked an allusion to a project for the federation of the Balkan States, but this was immediately disavowed by the Kremlin. [185]

Dimitrov died on July 1, 1949; he was replaced as leader of the Government by Kolarov, and at the head of the Bulgarian Communist Party by his brother-in-law, Valko Tchervenkov.

The sentencing (March 8, 1949) of four Protestant pastors, accused of espionage, to life imprisonment, and the imprisonment of eleven others for a term of years, called forth vehement protests in the Christian world, and justified the sending of a diplomatic note by Great Britain, on March 12, in which these proceedings were described as a violation of Art. 2 of the peace treaty concerning 'fundamental liberties'.

The year 1949 was marked by progressive tension in the relations between Belgrade and Sofia. In September the Bulgarian Government denounced the treaty of friendship and, on October 6, the frontier agreement with Yugoslavia. This antagonism, which revived the Macedonian Question, reached a crisis at the trial of Traitcho Kostov, ex-Vice-President of the Council. Accused in March, by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, of 'flagrant errors' (the most serious accusation being that of having invoked the principle of State secrecy in order to withhold information of a commercial nature from representatives of the Soviet Union), Kostov found the charges gradually extended, until he was involved in a plot against the safety of the State, with the complicity of the Anglo-Americans and the agents of Tito. He was condemned to death, and executed on December 16. The Yugoslav press considered this charge as having been trumped up entirely with a view to compromising and discrediting Tito. 648 687 175 [208]

The municipal elections of May 15, 1949, gave the Communist-controlled Government of the 'Homeland Front' 92.1 per cent of the votes cast (370,000 blank votes); the legislative elections of December 18 raised this percentage to 666 175

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98.89 per cent (110,180 blank votes), the electors having no other option than to vote for the 'Front' or to register a blank vote.

Faithful to the guidance of Benes, Jean Masaryk and Ripka, the Third National Front Government, presided over by Gottwald, endeavoured to secure the triumph of a policy of equilibrium between East and West, between Liberalism and Marxism. 'In our country', declared Benes, 'under the pressure of the masses, Communism has become national.'

The first signs of Soviet pressure were seen when, after the Czech Cabinet had decided, in July, 1947, to accept an invitation to attend the Paris Conference for the application of the Marshall Plan, it was forced, on orders from Moscow, to withdraw its acceptance.

The final crisis was reached in February, 1948. An exceedingly violent press campaign was launched against Vaclav Nosek, Minister of the Interior, as the result of a purge which followed the discovery of illegal arms deposits. The Communist Party accused the National Socialists (Benes Party), the Popular Democrats and the Slovak Democrats of attempting to constitute an 'anti-Communist bloc' within the Government, and of paralysing the legislative power of the National Assembly. Tension reached its peak with the approach of the elections, then fixed for April 11, 1948.

The partisans of obedience to Moscow centred their efforts around the nucleus of the police and the trade union organisations. A 'Central Action Committee' was established, to back up, by mass movements, the offensive led by President Gottwald and his Communist colleagues against the moderate section of the Government. On February 20, 1948, the Ministers belonging to the three incriminated parties resigned. The Marxists held demonstrations in the streets; a political strike was declared on February 4, and the Congress of Works' Committees demanded the removal of the 'reactionaries'. President Benes, taken unawares by the suddenness of this attack, rejected the idea of a Government of Civil Servants and, on February 25, he formed a new National Front Ministry, with Gottwald as President, Gapotocki as Vice-President, Jean Masaryk at the head of Foreign Affairs. The Communists secured entire control of this Cabinet, which was in favour of unconditional collaboration with the Soviet Union. The opposition was reduced to

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642 175 563 the preceding Constitutions, this one contained no clause designed to protect minorities.

• [666] The elections, postponed until May 30,[1] gave 88 per cent of the votes (6,429,145) to the National Front, but the figure of 770,100 blank voting slips exceeded that anticipated by the Government. The latter was, however, fully master of the situation. On June 14 Clement Gottwald was elected President of the Republic, on the unanimous vote of the 296 deputies present. Under the chairmanship of Zapotocki, he formed a Cabinet on the lines of the previous one (sixteen Communists or supporters, and six non-Communists); the portfolio of Foreign Affairs remained in the hands of Klementis, who replaced Masaryk. The new Head of the Government announced implacable repressive action against 'those guilty of disorder or confusion, who seek to hinder the reconstruction of the country'.

[661] 659 798 175 Indeed, during the months that followed, there was a vigorous purging of diplomacy, the army, the police. But, in 1949, it was the religious question which was to dominate political life, owing to an offensive conducted against the Roman Church, opposing the old Czech Hussite spirit to Catholicism, the dominant trait in the Slovak national character.

Gottwald and his ministers, relying on this 'religious geography' peculiar to Czechoslovakia, embarked upon a struggle with the clergy in the domain of monopoly of the schools. They pursued the contest by seeking to alienate the Catholic Church from her natural hierarchy, and by encouraging the 'schism' of the Czech 'National' Church. To protest against the obstacles put in the way of the exercise of the cult, the bishops drew up a pastoral letter, setting forth the conditions required in order to regularise relations between the Church and the State. The Government forbade the distribution of the pastoral; infringements of this decree, specially numerous in Slovakia, were sternly repressed. Mgr. Beran, Archbishop of Prague, was detained in his palace; the civil authority created 'Catholic Action', an official organisation placed under the control of priests with Communist leanings. At the head of this movement was the Minister of Public Health, Father Plojhar, suspended by the ecclesiastical authorities for having sought a legislative mandate without his bishop's permission.

Tension rose with the 'resolutions' passed on June 28 by the

1 [1948--Analyst]